

**TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – SCHOOL OF URBAN MISSIONS
BIBLE COLLEGE AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY: REQUEST FOR
AUTHORIZATION AS A SEMINARY OR RELIGIOUS TRAINING
INSTITUTION**

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends authorization for School of Urban Missions (SUM) Bible College and Theological Seminary to operate as an authorized seminary or religious training institution under the Degree Authorization Act.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, which authorizes certain types of institutions to offer degrees and/or degree credits. These are: (1) Colorado publicly supported colleges and universities; (2) properly accredited private colleges and universities; (3) postsecondary seminaries and bible colleges; and (4) private occupational schools authorized by the Division of Private Occupational School. Persons or unauthorized organizations that violate the provisions of the statute are subject to legal penalties.

All private colleges and universities, out of state public colleges and universities, and seminaries or bible colleges are required to register with the Colorado Department of Higher Education and to meet criteria found in CCHE Policy Section I Part J, Degree Authorization Act, in order to receive authorization to offer degrees within Colorado. Such authorization must be received by the institution prior to offering any program of instruction, academic credits, or degrees; opening a place of business; soliciting students or enrollees; or offering educational support services.

The Commission administers the Degree Authorization Act by determining an institution's eligibility to operate pursuant to statute and CCHE policy. Commission action is required by statute in order for institutional authorization at any level.

In the case of a seminary or bible college, an institution must qualify as a bona fide religious postsecondary educational institution which is exempt from property taxation under the laws of this state. It shall require for admission at least a high school diploma or its equivalent and shall not offer programs or courses that are secular in nature. Additionally, to qualify as a bona fide religious postsecondary educational institution, an organization must meet each of the following criteria:

1. Be a non-profit institution owned, controlled, operated, and maintained by a bona fide church or religious denomination, lawfully operating as a non-profit religious corporation pursuant to Title 7 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.
2. Limit the educational program to the principles of that church or denomination and grant degrees or diplomas only in areas of study that contain on their face a reference to the theological or religious aspect of the degree's subject area. Institutions operating under this degree authorization shall not award degrees in any area of physical science or medicine; or degrees appropriate only for academic institutions; or degrees associated with specific professional fields or endeavors not clearly and directly related to religious studies or occupations.
3. Not market, offer, or grant degrees or diplomas which are represented as being linked to a church or denomination, but which actually are degrees in secular areas of study.
4. Have obtained exemption from property taxation under state law and shall have provided the Department a copy of the certificate of this exemption.

The SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary is proposing to offer the following degree programs:

- Associate of Arts in Biblical Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies
- Master of Arts in Biblical Studies
- Master of Arts in Christian Leadership

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

A representative from the SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary and a DHE staff member **have been** in regular communication to assure the appropriate submission of documents. Staff has reviewed the documents submitted and finds that the criteria outlined in policy are met as outlined in CCHE policy, Section I, Part J.

The School of Urban Missions (SUM) is a Louisiana Corporation with a corporate office and a main campus in Oakland, CA. The corporation is governed by a Board of Directors and is affiliated with the Assemblies of God Department of Home Missions. SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary is a religious 501(c)(3) non-profit college that seeks to provide an affordable biblical/theological education to urban residents. The Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education accredits SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary.

SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary's accrediting agency, ABHE, authorized the institution to pursue an extension site in Greeley, Colorado at the New Hope Christian Center.

The ABHE Commission on Accreditation's regulation for an extension site requires that it be under the administrative and legal control of the parent institution's president and board. Based on the affiliation with New Hope Christian Center, SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary meets the definition of "a seminary or bible college as a bona fide religious postsecondary educational institution doing business or maintaining a place of business in the state of Colorado and that offers bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees or diplomas" (C.R.S. 23-2-102 (4)).

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve authorization for SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary as a seminary or religious training institution under the Degree Authorization Act.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

§23-2-103.3 (4), C.R.S.